

Serial No.: 10/673,353
Art Unit: 3747
Examiner: HARRIS, Katrina
Page 3 of 4

REMARKS

The specification has been amended for the purposes of clarity. No new matter has been added by way of this amendment.

The claims have not been amended.

Claims 2-12 remain pending in the application. Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 2, 3, 5-10 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bourret et al. in view of Hattori. The Examiner also rejected claims 4 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bourret et al. in view of Kato.

The present application is a continuation of US Non-provisional Application No. 09/794,238, which was filed on February 28, 2001, which claims priority to US Provisional Application No. 60/185,703, filed on February 29, 2000, and to US Provisional Application No. 60/257,174, filed on December 22, 2000. As such, the present application has its earliest priority date as of February 29, 2000. Bourret has a filing date of August 10, 2001 and a priority date of August 11, 2000, both of which are later than the priority date of the present application, and as such Bourret is not citable as prior art against the present application under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)/103(a). The rejection is thus in error and should be withdrawn.

The Applicant intended to claim the priority of the above-noted provisional applications when the present application was originally filed, and believed that the original wording of the specification was sufficient to effect a valid claim of priority. Upon reviewing the application when responding to the present office action, however, Applicants realized that the claims to the above-noted provisional applications were not noted in the records of the Office. Applicants were unsure whether this was a mere clerical error on the part of the Office, or whether the Applicant's claims to priority were denied for some reason of which the Applicants have not been notified. Clarification from the Examiner is requested. Assuming it was indeed a clerical error, it is requested that the Office's records be amended to reflect the above-noted priority claims.

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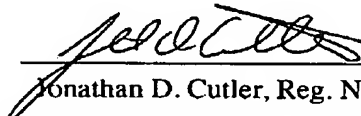
Serial No.: 10/673,353
Art Unit: 3747
Examiner: HARRIS, Katrina
Page 4 of 4

Notwithstanding the above, the application has been amended to further clarify this claim of priority. The applicants do not believe that the fee for an unintentionally delayed claim for priority is required as the priority claim was made at the time of filing.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the Applicant respectfully submits that all of the currently pending claims are allowable and that the entire application is in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable to place the application in a better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,


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